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ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

[From the Washington Chronicle.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Dec. 27.—The Richmond Dispatch, of the
25th inst., has been received here. It contains
the following dispatches:

PETERSBURG, Dec. 24.—On Monday, Gen.
Pryor, with a small detachment, attacked a
Yankee force at Isle of Wight Court House,
and chased them ten miles at full speed. Our
loss was trifling.

A considerable number of tents have recent-
ly been sent up from Richmond to Lee's army.

The Richmond Examiner, of the 25th inst.,
intimated that Lee with a portion of his army
was moving towards Culpeper to make a de-
monstration in front of Washington; but it was
known that Lee was still at Fredericksburg on
Friday noon.

On Tuesday a brigade of Confederate caval-
ry were outfitted with rations and forage for
several days, and revolvers were distributed to
the men near Guiney's station.

It was believed there that their destination
was King George's county, via Port Royal.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Dec. 28.—Heavy firing was heard yesterday
evening in the direction of Dumfries.

Intelligence from Aquia Creek to-day states
that at about four o'clock yesterday, about four
thousand Confederates, with four guns, made
an attack on four regiments of Sigel's infantry
at Dumfries.

The conflict lasted until dark, and was re-
newed again this morning. The cannonading
was more intense, and apparently nearer this
point than on yesterday. The telegraph office
ceased to work yesterday, and up to 4 p. m.
to-day no official dispatch has been received
here.

LATER.—Telegraphic operations have been re-
sumed. An official report states that the ene-
my's cavalry numbered but fifteen hundred,
that they attacked the town of Dumfries, but
were driven off with loss. The Federal loss
was three killed and eleven wounded.

The firing to-day was in the direction of Oc-
eoquan, and was probably caused by the ene-
my's cavalry falling in with Gen. Slocum's in-
fantry.

It is unofficially stated that several sutlers'
wagons have been captured by Lee, and it is
considered unsafe to transport goods by that
route.

The enemy are engaged every night in rais-
ing and extending breastworks along the streets
fronting the river, as if to prevent any future
escaping by pontoon bridges.

A friendly interview has existed between the
respective river pickets, until recently, to pre-
vent the communication of improper informa-
tion, a positive order has been issued to sus-
pend the fraternization.

On Friday, a Confederate commissioned offi-
cer and two privates were seized on this side,
and sent back on their side of the river.

The exchange of newspapers has also been
interdicted by Gen. Burnside.

Flags of truce cross the Rappahannock every
day, principally to transfer to the other side
citizens who come into the lines to escape the

bombardment.

The soldiers are taking advantage of the
pleasant weather in providing against future
cold weather by building huts.

Advices from Richmond state that the iron
clad gunboat Richmond makes a daily trip to
Drury's Bluff.

Attorney General Bates' opinion on citizen-
ship appears in full, being a letter addressed to
Secretary Chase on the question whether or
not colored men can be citizens of the U. S. In
discussing what constitutes a citizen of the U.
States, he says he has made a fruitless search
in the law books and records for a clear and sat-
isfactory definition of that phrase. None
such can be found in judicial decisions, nor by
continued and consentaneous action of the dif-
ferent branches of the political government.—
The constitution does not declare, he adds, who
are, and who are not citizens, nor does it at-
tempt to describe the constitutional elements
of citizenship. It is silent about race and color,
and if negroes are a degraded race, and, being
tainted with that, are not citizens, he cannot
comprehend the thought of absolute incompat-
ibility of degradation and citizenship. A dis-
tinction between State and Federal suffrage and
citizenship is drawn, and an analytical review
of the subject from the time of the Romans
down to the present time is made, concluding
as follows: "And now upon the whole matter
I give it as my opinion that a free man of color
if born in the U. S., is a citizen of the U. S.,
and, if otherwise qualified according to the
acts of Congress, can be master of a vessel en-
gaged in the coasting trade.

An enlisted man named Lewis Falk, who
had been assigned to duty in the office of the
Military Governor in Washington, and who, it
is supposed, there got possession surreptitious-
ly of a number of blank military passes, has
been arrested and consigned to the Old Capitol,
on the charge of having forged the signatures
of certain officials, which were appended to
them, and sold the fraudulent passes to traders
with the military camps and others. Falk, it
is alleged, confesses that he sold many of the
passes for various amounts, ranging from ten
to one hundred dollars. A firm, doing busi-
ness under the name of Spengler & Co., and their
clerks, were also arrested and sent to the Old
Capitol, on the charge of having purchased
some of the papers, knowing them to be fraud-
ulent.

Accounts from Utah represents the recently
appointed United States Judges to be dissat-
isfied with the condition of affairs in that ter-
ritory, the Legislative Assembly still throwing
every obstacle in the way of holding courts and
bringing criminals to justice.

It was rumored in Washington on Saturday
that the Confederates had again occupied
Winchester, the Federal forces retiring to Har-
per's Ferry.

The two steamers, which left New York for
Europe on Saturday, took out \$296,907 in spe-
cie.

The bark Kate Stamler, Captain Fish,
which arrived at New York from Pensacola,
brings 288 bales of cotton, cargo of schooner
Jefferson Davis, captured September 17, by
U. S. bark William G. Anderson. The cotton
is in charge of Acting Master S. Withington,
who came passenger by the Stamler. She has
on board 140 casks returned whisky, 7,000 32-
pounder shot and one large rifled gun.

It is said Mr. Thurlow Weed positively de-
nies that he has sold the Albany Evening
Journal to Mr. Van Dyck, or any one else.

There are remaining now in the hospitals of
Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria
thirteen thousand two hundred and sixty-sev-
en sick and wounded soldiers.

The steamer having on board Gen. Banks
and his staff arrived at New Orleans on the
14th instant. Five thousand of the troops
had landed at Baton Rouge, and the remain-
der were to be sent forward as fast as they ar-
rived.

William Whiting, of Boston, has been re-
tained by the U. S. government as solicitor and
special counsel of the War Department.

The grave question of the national finances
is commanding much of the President's atten-
tion. In a long conversation with a gentle-
man of high standing summoned to the White
House for consultation on this topic, Mr. Lin-
coln, a day or two ago, expressed his earnest
conviction that under the system of Treasury
issues, we were rapidly drifting, as he express-
ed it, towards "Continental prices."

Thirty-eight condemned Indians were hung
on the 27th at Mankato, Minnesota, in the
presence of several thousand spectators. All
passed off quietly.

Luther A. Martin, residing at Allen's Fresh,
Charles county, Md., was dangerously stabbed
on the 20th inst. by Robert Oliver.

The New York Tribune, so well known as a
strong republican and administration paper, in
a late editorial seems to accept a rumored pro-
posed mediation between the North and South.
It says:—"Wherever war exists, no matter
whether international or civil, we hold there is
ample excuse for friendly and impartial me-
diation. We can scarcely imagine a case
wherein such mediation would be justly re-
garded as impertinent or in any way offen-
sive."

The clerks of the Interior Department have
presented to Secretary Smith on his retirement
from the Cabinet, a silver service. They also
presented to Mrs. Smith, a gold watch, chain,
and diamond ring.

From Nassau we learn that the Governor
has issued a proclamation forbidding the pi-
lots to bring into port either Federal or Con-
federate cruisers.

It is expected that Gen. B. F. Butler, who
it is known has been relieved of his com-
mand at New Orleans, will arrive in Washing-
ton some time within this week.

It is said that the Balt. & Ohio R. R., will
be in running order by Monday next.